

## 5. In the Beginning – Planning Your Teen Summer Reading Program

Now that you have decided that you need a young adult summer reading program, your next step is planning. It's never too early to start planning. The earlier you get the details worked out, the sooner you can start working on publicity and incentives.

It is up to each librarian in each local library to look at the suggestions provided here, and put together a program that will best suit their community and the library staff. It can be very simple or quite involved. You decide.

Work with the rest of the library staff to answer the questions below...





1. When will the program begin and end? It can be as short as three weeks or as long as ten weeks.
2. Will teen participants count time (minutes), books, pages, or choose among these options? Whichever method you choose, remember that making success possible for all participants will encourage participation while helping teens feel good about themselves and their accomplishments.
3. How will you collect the reading records that teen participants complete? Keeping record-keeping simple makes the program easier for teens and library staff. Examples of reading records are included in the Appendix.
4. When teens have submitted completed reading records, how will you distribute incentives? Will there be a grand prize? Will you have regular drawings throughout the program? Where will winners pick up their prizes? How will you notify the winners? Ideas for distributing prizes are included in the section on implementing the program.
5. Who will implement the program? Will it be someone at the reference or circulation desk? At all costs, avoid having it handled by children's services staff or in the same area as the children's program.
6. How will you determine whether the program was successful?

When answering these questions, take time to ask the rest of the library staff their opinions. Allowing them to take part in planning the program will result in them feeling a sense of ownership for it, thereby motivating them to ensure it's success!





## Time or Books? The Age Old Question...

Okay, maybe it isn't age-old, but it is a question many librarians struggle with when planning a reading program. Remember those "top 10 ways to ruin a young adult reading program?" It's time to re-think how you conduct the program. Avoid automatically structuring your teen summer reading program the same as your children's program. Traditionally, participants in summer reading clubs are required to read a certain number of books in order to qualify for a prize. However, many librarians recognize that counting the number of minutes read emphasizes the act of reading rather than making reading a quantitative effort. Both methods, counting books or minutes read, have their advantages and disadvantages. Base your decision about which method to use on the ease of implementation and which your teens find most attractive.

### Books—

-  Keeping the quantity of books required to enter a prize drawing at a realistic number will allow teens to feel a sense of accomplishment. Generally a minimum of three to four books is a fair requirement, and will allow most participants to complete and turn in a reading record.
-  If participants are used to counting books, they may be more comfortable continuing with this method.
-  Counting books may increase your summer circulation statistics.
-  Having readers list titles allows you to track what your participants like to read.

### Time—

-  Using 15 minutes a day as a basis to determine how many hours a participant must read during the program will keep the requirement attainable for all but the busiest teens. Reading records that require 3 ½ to 4 hours be read for completion will allow many readers to turn in a record every two weeks.
-  Counting minutes rewards readers of various abilities equally.
-  Reading 15 or more minutes per day encourages the "habit" of daily reading.
-  Counting time read allows participants to read materials other than books: magazines, comics, even audiobooks.

**Remember...**

You cannot entice youth to read more by setting the criteria, whether it's books or minutes read, too high; setting unachievable goals will only discourage potential participants. Make the program goals realistic and attainable so your program *and* your participants can succeed!

